

Senate Bill 184
March 24, 2011
Presented by Joe Maurier
House Fish, Wildlife & Parks Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Joe Maurier, Director of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here to provide information about Senate Bill 184.

SB184 enables the FWP Commission to establish an archery-only season for wild buffalo, and requires FWP to adopt rules that provide for the use of bows and arrows to hunt wild buffalo.

It is our understanding that the sponsor is primarily interested in the latter - rules allowing the use of archery equipment to hunt wild buffalo. The FWP Commission already has the authority and discretion under MCA 87-1-301 to adopt the hunting rules that it determines are appropriate, including whether or not bow and arrows may be used during the general bison season, which is the only season for bison hunting.

To date FWP has not recommended the fwp Commission adopt use of bows and arrows for hunting wild bison primarily because of social concerns. As you know, bison are a very high profile species right now with a lot of eyes throughout the country watching what is happening with all things bison.

The landownership in the area surrounding Yellowstone National Park is mixed, so it is important hunters have a clean kill to avoid wounded animals moving across landownerships. Bison are large animals that can be difficult to quickly kill – which is why FWP encourages rifle hunters attempt head shots. Because it would be during a general season, archers would have to wear hunter orange, making it that much more difficult to get as close for accurate shot placement.

The FWP Commission hasn't promoted an archery season to date primarily because of the potential negative perception that could fall upon hunters and bison hunting as a result of these types of concerns.